

REV. DR. JAMES SMITH

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PREACHER INFLUENCES

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Abraham Lincoln and religion

Rev. Dr. James Smith

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD MINISTER

By WILLIAM E. BARTON
Author of "The Soul of Abraham Lincoln"

A MULTITUDE of writers on the life of Abraham Lincoln, following without attempt at original investigation an authority which might have seemed to warrant their confidence, have told to the reading public that Rev. James Smith, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, in the years before Lincoln's election to the Presidency, undertook to convert the future President to old time Calvinistic orthodoxy, and prepared for his personal perusal a tract which later he insisted had resulted in Mr. Lincoln's conversion. So far as I am aware, no one of these writers undertook to learn whether that so-called "tract" might have been preserved. It is quite certain that all knowledge of it passed from Springfield. Herndon, Lincoln's law-partner, had very vague and unreliable memories of it, and Lamon was the original source of a considerable body of misinformation with regard to it.

Not only so, but the church of which Dr. Smith was pastor, and Mr. Lincoln an attendant, completely forgot about the matter. A successor of Dr. Smith, the Rev. James A. Reed, wrote a lecture on Lincoln's religion and delivered it in many places, and ultimately printed it in Scribner's Magazine, of which at that time Dr. J. G. Holland was editor. In that lecture Dr. Reed defended Dr. Smith from the charge of seeking to advertise himself in connection with Mr. Lincoln, but Dr. Reed had no knowledge of what Dr. Smith actually had written for Lincoln to read.

Furthermore, in 1909, Rev. Thomas D. Logan, D.D., for many years pastor of the same church, said he never had seen the so-called "tract," but in that year he was shown a copy of it. He made note of it, but apparently did not examine it in detail. Springfield was preparing for the centennial of Lincoln. Dr. Logan was to deliver an address in the church which Lincoln attended, and he wrote his remarks in full and furnished copy in advance to the daily press of Springfield and to at least one paper in Chicago. In that address he dwelt quite

on the relations between Dr. Smith and Lincoln, serving some valuable material part or which he obtained from Dr. Smith's granddaughter, Miss Jeanette Smith. But up to the time when he thought the address completed, and furnished his copy to the press, he did not know anything about the "tract."

In the interval between the furnishing of the copy and the delivery of the address, the granddaughters of Dr. Smith found the "tract," and Dr. Logan saw it and made a footnote in the proof, telling that it was not a tract, but a large book; and it was not written for Lincoln, but had been printed several years before Dr. Smith was called to Springfield.

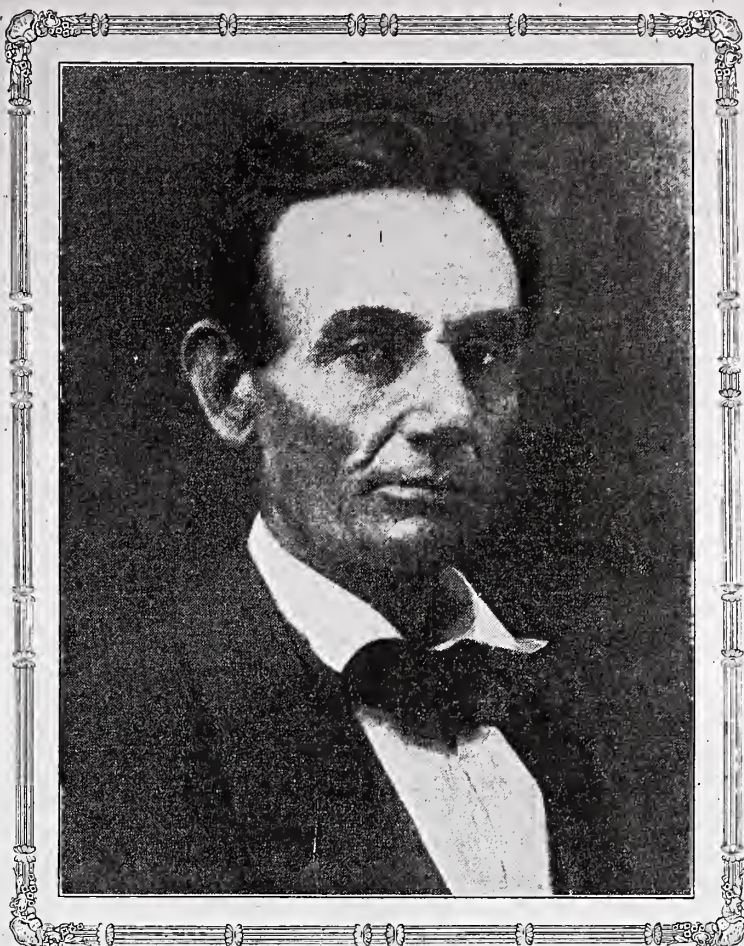
This was important news, but Dr. Logan carried his investigations no farther, and the announcement, coming as it did, with the great flood of new material brought forth in addresses and reminiscences at the time of the centenary, attracted less attention than it deserved.

FOR our present purpose, the notable thing is that all knowledge of the actual character of this work had disappeared. Dr. Reed knew nothing about it, though diligently searching for whatever would throw light on Lincoln's relations to that church. Dr. Logan in his many years of ministry in Springfield had never heard of it in its true character. Not one of Lincoln's biographers had seen or has seen a copy, to this day, unless Herndon may have seen it, and if he saw it, he had forgotten what it was like by the time he furnished his material to Lamon in 1873.

No man made so careful a study of the living Lincoln as his partner, William H. Herndon. His Life of Lincoln, which badly written and disproportioned, and containing many evidences of bad taste, is nevertheless invaluable to the student of Lincoln, as also is that which preceded it, the Life of Lincoln, by Ward Hill Lamon. Herndon denied having any share in the writing of Lamon's book, but it was based upon Herndon's manuscripts, of which he sold copies to Lamon for \$2,000, and afterward regretted it.

Lamon recorded in his book that Rev. James Smith, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Springfield, "a man of slender intellectual ability," attempted the ambitious task of converting Lincoln, and for that purpose wrote a tract which he presented to Lincoln, and which Lincoln never read, but which he told Dr. Smith was "unanswerable." Lamon said that Lincoln permitted Dr. Smith to intimate that Lincoln was converted by this reading, because Lincoln, while on the whole an honest politician, was by no means an unselfish one, and was willing thus to make friends of the powerful party represented by the vote of the religious people of the country.

That was not a very attractive characteristic to



ascribe to Lincoln, and there were many who took up the cudgels against Lamon, but among them all not one ever challenged the statement about the manuscript tract.

EVEN in the church of which Dr. Smith was pastor, all knowledge had disappeared of the actual character of that work which Mr. Lincoln pronounced "unanswerable."

Early in 1850, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln visited her relatives in Kentucky. They were in deep sorrow at the time. Their little boy, Edward Baker Lincoln, had died February 1, 1850, and it is singular that even at the Lincoln tomb they have no precise record of the date of his death, nor has the Illinois Historical Society, nor, so far as I have been able to learn, has any Life of Lincoln. The date is important for our purpose, because it fixes the beginning of Lincoln's acquaintance with an important man, and with the "tract" of which we are writing.

On the table of Mrs. Lincoln's relatives in Lexington, Mr. Lincoln picked up a thick octavo book, bound in leather, and entitled "The Christian's Defence." It was a book seven years old, having been published by J. A. James of Cincinnati, in 1843. The firm is still in existence, and it has been my pleasure to inform the son of the original publisher of the important part which this book had in the life of Lincoln. He knew, of course, that the book was one which his father published, though the firm has no copy of it, but he did not know that Lincoln had ever read it.

Mr. Lincoln was greatly interested in the book, and partly read it. The author of the book was James Smith, the very man who was at that time pastor in Springfield, and Mr. Lincoln had but recently met him.

Mrs. Lincoln was at this time a communicant in the Episcopal Church in Springfield. The Rev. Charles Dresser, who had married Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, was still rector of that church, but he was out of town when the little boy died, and the family turned to the Presbyterian minister to conduct the funeral service.

As Lincoln read in this book, he discovered that it was the substance of a joint debate between Dr. Smith and an infidel named Olmsted. The debate had occurred at Columbus, Mississippi, and had occupied several evenings extending over a period of three weeks. Dr. Smith had taken eighteen months to prepare for the debate, and had sent to Scotland where his friends stocked up his library with all that then was latest in Biblical archeology, the latest discoveries in Egypt, the researches of Rawlinson, and all the rest; and fully armed at every point, he had met his antagonist and driven him from the arena.

When Lincoln returned to Springfield, he in-

formed Thomas Lewis, an elder in the Presbyterian Church and a lawyer whose office was near his, that he had read a portion of this book and would like to finish it. Lewis told Dr. Smith, who, at Lincoln's request, furnished him with the volume. Lincoln read it and told Dr. Smith that he considered it "unanswerable." Even Lamon and Herndon admitted that Lincoln said that.

I find some reason to believe that this book had something to do with the suggestion of the Lincoln and Douglas debates. It was just the kind of thing which Lincoln admired and could appreciate. It was the first time in his life he had heard the Christian apologetic in terms which a careful lawyer could admire and appreciate.

Lincoln told his brother-in-law, Ninian W. Edwards, that the reading of the book had produced a marked change in his own thinking. He said the same to others of his friends.

Furthermore, he took a pew in the First Presbyterian Church, which church Mrs. Lincoln joined in 1852, and there their next child was baptized: none of his children so far as the records show were baptized in the Episcopal Church.

From this time, Lincoln became a somewhat regular church attendant; he had been very infrequent before. And he was a friend of Dr. Smith until his own death, appointing him United States Consul to Dundee, Scotland, which post he occupied at the time of Lincoln's death—Dr. Smith then was an elderly man, retired from pastoral service.

This book was printed in a small edition, and completely sold out before it left the press. It was never plentiful in Springfield, and that town accepted the statement of Lamon that Lincoln was presented with a manuscript tract by Dr. Smith in a futile attempt to convert Lincoln. The world has had Dr. Smith held up to its gaze as a self-advertising meddler of small ability, forcing himself upon public notice in a more intimate relation with Lincoln than he had any right to assume, and forcing his tract also upon Lincoln, who ignored it, but made the

WHAT the world has been told about this is as discreditable to Lincoln as it is unfair to Dr. Smith, and untrue in its essential features. What Dr. Smith gave to Lincoln was not a tract prepared for his special use, but a big thick book, containing two volumes bound in one, with 312 and 364 pages, a total of 676 pages. Lincoln came to know of it by accident, and not through the act of Dr. Smith, and Dr. Smith brought him a copy at Lincoln's request. Instead of ignoring it, Lincoln read it and rented a pew in Dr. Smith's church, and gave him public recognition, and held him in life-long honor.

What I am now seeking to do is to expand Dr. Logan's footnote of eleven years ago into a footnote to history, and to suggest as comprehensively as may be done within the limits of an article like this, the essential truth about Abraham Lincoln's relations with his Springfield minister. Dr. Smith was not a man of feeble intellect. He was an able man, a big man in body and brain. He took advanced ground on the temperance question, and Lincoln admired him for this, and was one of the men who signed a request for the printing of a sermon demanding the prohibition of the liquor traffic by law, and it was Dr. Smith who preached the sermon, a few copies of which still exist.

I am not willing to affirm that the reading of Dr. Smith's book produced Abraham Lincoln's conversion, but I do believe that it produced a marked effect upon him, and influenced for good his religious thinking in all his later years.

It goes without saying that Dr. Smith's arguments were not wholly such as a preacher of today would use in like situation. Much water has run under the bridge since Rawlinson. But Rawlinson was the last word at that time, and Dr. Smith sent across the ocean and obtained that last word, and other last words, and used them effectively. No man who will read the nearly seven hundred pages in his big book will ever say that James Smith was a man of feeble intellect.

Pew Number 20, in the old church, identified by the records of the treasurer whose receipts show the Lincoln pew-rent paid up to the time the family left for Washington, is the pew that Lincoln and his family occupied from 1850 to 1861. And this is, in brief, the story of how it happened, and how Mrs. Lincoln withdrew from the Episcopal Church whose minister had married her, and in which she had been confirmed, and united with the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield. And this is the true story of a strong and able minister, who rendered an important service to the spiritual life of Abraham Lincoln, of which the world ought to know the facts.

LINCOLN CONVINCED BY PASTOR'S BOOK

Work That Won Him Over to
Church Is Found—Writ-
ten in 1843.

ANSWER TO AN ATHEIST

Minister Refuted Arguments
of Authors Who Had In-
fluenced Lincoln.

CHICAGO, Dec. 19.—The Rev. Dr. W. E. Barton of Oak Park to-day found an old book that changed the religious thinking of Abraham Lincoln. The name of the book was "The Christian's Defence," by James Smith. It was published in Cincinnati in 1843. The book was found after a long and systematic search through second hand shops and the attics of libraries, colleges and theological schools from New England to Mississippi.

Dr. Barton tells the following story of the long missing volume:

"The story connected with this book had its start back in 1850, when Edwin Baker Lincoln, second son of Abraham and Mary Lincoln, died at Springfield, Ill.," said the Rev. Barton. "Funeral services were conducted by the Rev. James Smith, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, in the absence of the Rev. Charles Dresser of the Episcopal Church, of which Mrs. Lincoln was a member.

"Shortly after that Lincoln, visiting in Lexington, Ky., picked up a thick leather bound volume called 'The Christian's Defence.' He noted that it was written by the Springfield minister who had so recently come into his home.

"On his return to Springfield Lincoln

borrowed a copy of the book from the author and became deeply interested in it.

"It was the outgrowth of a religious debate between the Rev. Mr. Smith and an infidel named Olmstead at Columbus, Miss. Mr. Smith was a Scotchman who had been a deist. When he was challenged to this debate he took eighteen months to prepare for it.

"He quoted from Volney's 'Ruins' and Paine's 'Age of Reason' and showed himself thoroughly familiar with the literature of the opponents of the Christian religion, and then brought in his refutation.

"Lincoln in his early manhood had read Paine and Volney and had been impressed by their teachings. He had never heard their arguments refuted in this manner. He returned the book to Dr. Smith with the statement that he considered his arguments 'unanswerable.'

"It is remarkable that all knowledge of this book perished from Springfield. The fact that there was such a book came out in connection with the Lincoln centennial celebration in Springfield in 1909.

"The pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Dr. Logan, mentioned it in his celebration address. He had learned about the book from two great-granddaughters of Dr. Smith.

"I journeyed to Springfield, met these ladies and examined the book. I also read Dr. Smith's and others' statements of the affair.

"Among these statements is one written by Ninian Edwards, who said that Lincoln had told him 'I have been reading a work of Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity and have heard him preach and converse on the subject, and am now convinced of the truth of the Christian religion.'

"After Lincoln read the book Mrs. Lincoln left the Episcopal Church and joined the First Presbyterian Church, and Lincoln rented a pew, paying \$50 a year for it.

"After Lincoln became President he learned that Dr. Smith had retired from the active ministry and wished to return to his own country. He appointed him United States Consul to Edinburgh.

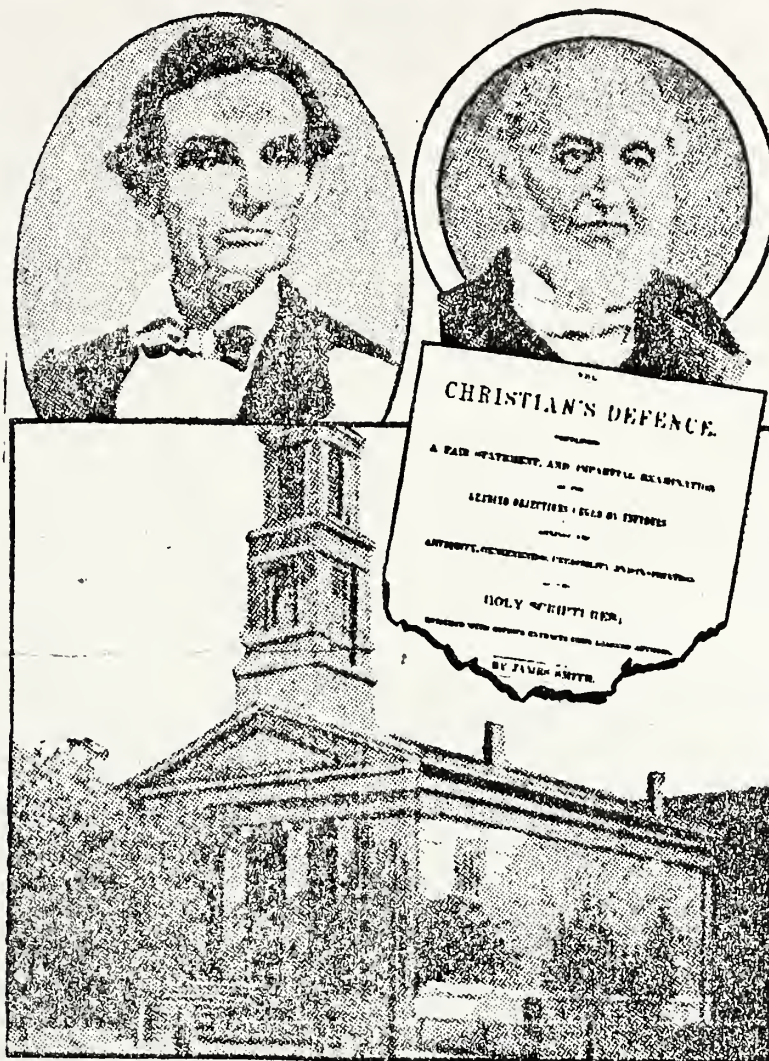
"The 'Christian's Defence' is printed in two parts, one of 312 pages, the other of 364 pages, and the type is small."

New York Herald
Dec 21, 1921

THE NEW

BARTON FINDS BOOK THAT CONVERTED LINCOLN

Tells How Reading "The Christian's Defence" Changed His Religious Thinking



Above (left) Abraham Lincoln, as he looked at the time he read "The Christian's Defence," (right) Dr. James Smith, author of the book. Below; the First Presbyterian church of Springfield, Ill., where Smith preached and Lincoln attended. Inset: the cover of the book.

BY DR. WILLIAM E. BARTON.
Author, "The Soul of Abraham Lincoln," "The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln," Etc.

OAK PARK, Dec. 5.—There lies before me, as I write, the book that changed the religious thinking of Abraham Lincoln.

It is "The Christian's Defence," by James Smith, published in Cincinnati in 1843. I found this book after a long and systematic search through second-hand shops and the attics of libraries, colleges and theological schools from New England to Mississippi.

The story connected with this book had its start back in 1850, when Edwin Baker Lincoln, second son of Abraham and Mary Lincoln, died at Springfield, Ill.

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On his return to Springfield Lincoln borrowed a copy of the book from the author, and became deeply interested in it.

It was the outgrowth of a religious debate between Rev. Smith and an infidel named Ohnstead, at Columbus, Miss. Dr. Smith was a Scotchman who had been a deist. When he was challenged to this debate he took 18 months to prepare for it.

Arguments Unanswerable.

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Lincoln Joins Church.

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Lincoln Lore

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Number 1542

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

August, 1966

THE CHRISTIAN'S DEFENCE

Editor's Note: Dr. Wayne C. Temple in a very short article which appeared in *The Clarion* (The Parish Newspaper of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois) dated April 24, 1966, announced that the identical copy of *The Christian's Defence* by the Rev. Dr. James Smith which was read by Abraham Lincoln had been presented to the Church of which Dr. Smith had once been the pastor. For many years this valuable book had been the property of Dr. Smith's granddaughter, who resided in Springfield, Illinois. The gift was presented to the church this year by "the descendants" of the Presbyterian minister.

This announcement, when brought to the attention of the editor, reminded him that he had once published an article on *The Christian's Defence* in the August, 1934 issue of *Hobbies Magazine*. The six typewritten page article which originally appeared without illustrations or notes is here presented with both. However, it has been necessary to edit the 1934 article to bring it up to date. In doing this, the editor has consulted Wayne C. Temple's article "Lincoln and the Rev. Dr. James A. Smith" which appeared in the Winter 1964 issue of the *Lincoln Herald*, pages 181 to 183.

Due to the fact that Abraham Lincoln's religion has been exhaustively discussed by many authors, the book entitled *The Christian's Defence*, which Lincoln read, has received extensive study.¹ With the exception of the Bible, this work likely influenced his religious life more than any other book. The author of this massive volume was the Rev. Dr. James Smith, a Presbyterian minister, who was formerly the editor of the *Cumberland Presbyterian*. His analytical and unusual way of presenting facts likely appealed to Lincoln's legal mind.

The Christian's Defence contains the addresses and written arguments which were presented during the Spring of 1841 by Dr. Smith in a debate with an "infidel" named C. G. Olmsted in Columbus, Mississippi.² In preparing this work the author communicated with theologians and friends in Great Britain, who procured and sent him the latest and best materials on this subject.³ The work is so extensive that it occasions much admiration for the earnestness and industry of the author. A study of the text reveals that Dr. Smith was familiar with both sides of the question. He knew the tenets of Hume, Volney, Taylor and Paine, as well as the theological doctrines of the Christian religion.⁴ The debate was so prolonged that nineteen evenings were required for both contestants to present their arguments. After the debates were concluded, a book containing the addresses and dissertations

of Dr. Smith was published in a very limited edition.⁵

Rev. James Smith spent many years of his early life in the South, and it was from Shelbyville, Kentucky that he was called to the First Presbyterian Church at Springfield, Illinois.⁶ His pastorate began there on March 14, 1849 and continued until December 17, 1856.

The Lincolns' intimate acquaintance with this minister began when their second son, Edward Baker, died.⁷ During her residence in Springfield Mrs. Lincoln had attended the Episcopal Church; but since the rector of her church was absent from the city at the time of her son's death, it was necessary to have the funeral services conducted by some other minister. The Rev. James Smith was asked to officiate and on February 2nd he conducted services for the four year old child. It is said that the Lincolns were so impressed by his comforting words and his religious approach to matters of life and death that they started attending his church. On April 13, 1852 Mary Lincoln became a communicant and the Lincolns occupied pew No. 20.

In late October and early November of the year 1849, the Lincolns visited Mrs. Lincoln's relatives in Kentucky.⁸ While in Lexington Mr. Lincoln picked up a book in the Todd library entitled *The Christian's Defence*, written by the Springfield minister. Lincoln started to read the book, but because of the short duration of their visit was compelled to leave the work unfinished. Upon arrival in Springfield, he secured from the author another copy of the same book. He also formed at this time a closer acquaintance with the minister. Perhaps it was this book which led the Lincolns to select Dr. Smith to conduct the funeral services

for their son.

The style of composition and the logical arguments of the author appealed to Lincoln. Here, for the first time, he saw the subject rationally presented. He was greatly impressed with the book's contents. Dr. Smith had written as a lawyer, and his presentation of Biblical history interested Lincoln. It is alleged that, after studying the book for several weeks, Lincoln changed his views regard-

THE
CHRISTIAN'S DEFENCE.
CONTAINING
A FAIR STATEMENT, AND IMPARTIAL EXAMINATION
OF THE
LEADING OBJECTIONS URGED BY INFIDELS
AGAINST THE
ANTQUITY, GENUINENESS, CREDIBILITY AND INSPIRATION
OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES;
ENRICHED WITH COPIOUS EXTRACTS FROM LEARNED AUTHORS.

BY JAMES SMITH.

"The Christian Faith.
Unlike the timorous creeds of pagan priests,
It stands, stands forth to view, inviting all
To prove, examine, search, investigate;
And gave herself a light to me her by."—*Fallick's Course of Time* 11 v.
"If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if otherwise
and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto."—*2 Maccabees* xv. 23.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.
VOL. I.

CINCINNATI:
STEREOTYPED AND PUBLISHED BY J. A. JAMES.
1843.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Title page of the Foundation's copy of *The Christian's Defence*.



From the Collection of Lloyd Ostendorf

James Smith was born in Glasgow, Scotland, May 11, 1801, and died in Scotland on July 3, 1871. At the time of his death he was the United States Consul at Dundee, Scotland, having received his appointment from President Abraham Lincoln. On January 9, 1863, in a note to Secretary of State William H. Seward, Lincoln wrote: "Dr. Smith, mentioned within, is an intimate personal friend of mine."

ing religion. Apparently, Lincoln's comment relative to Dr. Smith's arguments was that they were "unanswerable."

Lincoln's brother-in-law, Ninian W. Edwards, on December 24, 1872 made this statement regarding the book's influence upon Lincoln:

"A short time after the Rev. Dr. Smith became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in this city, Mr. Lincoln said to me, 'I have been reading a work of Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity, and have heard him preach and converse on the subject, and am now convinced of the truth of the Christian religion.'"

Additional testimony regarding Lincoln's reading the work of the Rev. Dr. Smith was given in an address by Rev. William Bishop at Salina, Kansas on February 12, 1897. In this address it is stated that Rev. James Smith, in one of his conversations with Rev. William Bishop, said:

"With some suggestion bearing on the right attitude required for impartial investigation, I placed in his (Lincoln's) hands my book (*The Christian's Defence*) on the evidence of Christianity, which gives the arguments for and against the divine authority and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Lincoln took the book, and for a number of weeks, as a lawyer, examined and weighed the evidence, pro and con, and judged of the credibility of the contents of revelation."

Mr. Thomas Lewis, on January 6, 1873, also made a statement regarding the fact that Lincoln read *The Christian's Defence*:

"Not long after Dr. Smith came to Springfield, and I think very near the time of his son's death, Mr. Lincoln said to me that when on a visit somewhere he had seen and partially read a work of Dr. Smith on the evidences of Christianity, which had led him to change his view of the Christian religion, and he would like to get that work and finish the reading of it, and also to make the acquaintance of Dr. Smith. I was an elder in Dr. Smith's church, and took Dr. Smith to Mr. Lincoln's office, and Dr. Smith

gave Mr. Lincoln a copy of his book, as I know, at his own request."

In a letter written from Cainno, Scotland, dated January 24, 1867, the Rev. Dr. Smith made this statement:

"It was my honor to place before Mr. Lincoln arguments designed to prove the divine authority and inspiration of the scriptures, accompanied by the arguments of infidel objectors in their own language."

Ward H. Lamon in his biography states that Lincoln did not read the work of the Rev. James Smith, which he discussed as follows:

"Mr. Smith composed a heavy tract out of his own head to suit the particular case. 'The preparation of that work,' says he, 'cost me long and arduous labor,' but it does not appear to have been read. Mr. Lincoln took the 'work' to his office, laid it down without writing his name on it, and never took it up again to the knowledge of a man who inhabited that office with him, and who saw it lying on the same spot every day for months."

Because of the fact that the book entitled *The Christian's Defence* was published six years before the Rev. James Smith came to Springfield, few people there knew that he was the author of such a work. Apparently, this was the case with Ward Hill Lamon whose writings on the subject of *The Christian's Defence* appear to be rather confused. He evidently did not know the title of the work or the reason for which it was written.

The Christian's Defence was first published in a very limited edition, as other subsequent editions were expected to be forthcoming from the press.¹⁴ However, it is thought that the first was also the last and only edition. The entire lot was completely sold before it came from the press and it never came into general circulation in Illinois.¹⁵

The title page of this excessively rare religious work is as follows:

The/Christian's Defence/Containing/a Fair Statement, and Impartial Examination/of the/Leading Objections Urged by Infidels/Against the/Antiquity, Genuineness, Credibility and Inspiration/of the/Holy Scriptures;/Enriched with Copious Extracts from Learned Authors/by James Smith/(quotation: Pollack's Course of Time)/(quotation: Macabees)/Two Volumes in one/Vol. 1/Cincinnati/Stereotyped and Published by J. A. James/1843.¹⁶

The first printed page of this work contains advertisements of books published by the press of J. A. James of Cincinnati, Ohio. The first three advertised, namely: *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon, *Napier's Peninsular War* by W. F. Napier, and *Rollin's Ancient History* were all read by Lincoln.¹⁷ James Smith, the author of *The Christian's Defence*, endorsed the *Evangelical Family Library* advertised on the same page.

Four printed pages are devoted to the notices of the debate which led to the publishing of *The Christian's Defence*. The four pages contain three exceedingly long letters, all dated during the year 1841 and posted from Columbus, Mississippi. The book was copyrighted according to an act of Congress in the year 1843 by James Smith in the clerk's office for the district court of Kentucky.

On the sixth printed page the work is dedicated as follows:

"To the Honorable Henry P. Brodnax, This Work is Most Gratefully and Most Respectfully Inscribed, by His Friend, the Author, May 11, MDCCCXLIII."¹⁸

The above inscription is of interest because of the fact that Henry P. Brodnax was very likely an acquaintance of Lincoln's father in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Henry Power Brodnax was admitted as an attorney at the Elizabethtown bar at the April 1796 term of Hardin County Court.¹⁹ During this same year Thomas Lincoln was employed to construct a mill by Samuel Haycraft, Sr., in Elizabethtown.²⁰ Documentary evidence is available that Henry Power Brodnax practiced law in Elizabethtown during the period that Lincoln's parents resided there.

In a letter written to Samuel Haycraft, Jr., by Mark Hardin, from Shelbyville, Kentucky, February 1871 it is stated that:

"He (Brodnax) became an active, zealous Cumberland Presbyterian, built a church at his own expense, on his own land, and was very active in the service of the church. He had enemies and the house of worship was burned down. Eventually he joined the Old School Pres-

byterian Church. He never married and by his will, as he had received nothing from his family, so he chose to will a large portion of his property to be devoted to the education of the needy, upward of twenty thousand (\$20,000) dollars was appropriated to the Brodnax professorship in the Theological Seminary at Danville (Ky.) some time between the years 1850 and 1860."²¹

Due to the many philanthropies of Brodnax for the cause of religion and religious education, it is easy to see that Rev. James Smith would admire him and might dedicate his work to him. It is very likely that Smith and Brodnax formed their acquaintance in Shelbyville, Kentucky where Smith had a pastorate and where Brodnax practiced law and held court.

Dr. Smith's own copy of the book, the one he loaned to Lincoln, is today extant. As stated in the *Editor's Note*, it is now the property of the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois. Other copies of this work should have a permanent place in all extensive collections of Lincolniana, because of its influence upon Lincoln's religious life.²²

NOTES

1. The author, James Smith, and the book, *The Christian's Defence*, have received extensive discussion by Dr. William E. Barton in his work entitled, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, George H. Doran Company, New York, N.Y., 1920. See pages 75, 76, 132-136, 156-164, 270, 323-324, 358.
2. C. G. Olmsted was the author of a work entitled *The Bible Its Own Refutation*. Smith, James: *The Christian's Defence* preface, page X. The subject of C. G. Olmsted's lectures were: "The Natures and Tendencies of Infidelity" and "The Evidences of Christianity" Barton, William E.: *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, page 358.
3. A period of fifteen months was spent in preparation for these debates which continued for nearly three weeks. Smith, James: *The Christian's Defence* preface, page X. There is some reason to believe that Dr. Smith's three-week debate with C. G. Olmsted at Columbus, Mississippi might have suggested to Lincoln the idea of a series of debates with Stephen A. Douglas. Barton, William E.: *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, page 76.
4. Smith, James: *The Christian's Defence* introductory page IX.
5. *Ibid*, introductory page XII.
6. Barton, William E.: *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, pages 156-157.
7. The second son of the Lincolns, Edward Baker, was born March 10, 1846.
8. Earl Schenck Miers. *Lincoln Day By Day A Chronology 1809-1865*, Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission, Vol. II, 1849-1860, Washington, 1860, pages 23-24. Dr. Barton stated incorrectly that the Lincolns visited relatives in Kentucky "in the Spring of the year 1850, after the death of their little son Eddie." *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, page 156.
9. Barton, William E.: *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, page 165.
10. *Ibid*, page 163.
11. *Ibid*
12. *Ibid*, page 158.

13. Ward H. Lamon: *The Life of Abraham Lincoln from His Birth to His Inauguration as President*, James R. Osgood and Company, Boston, Mass., 1872, pages 498, 499.

From an inscription in Lincoln's hand discovered in a copy of Shakespeare's works, it is evident that Lincoln and Dr. Smith exchanged other books in addition to *The Christian's Defence*. Mr. John Howell, a book dealer of San Francisco, California, in a letter dated May 10, 1930, states:

"Several Years ago I was fortunate to have a copy of Shakespeare belonging to Lincoln with his name on the title page. . . . On the first page was also written by Lincoln 'From Dr. Smith's library.' In another hand was written: 'Bought by him or presented to him by Abraham Lincoln.'"

The above-mentioned book, *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, published by James Conner, New York, N. Y., 1835, is now owned by The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C. Some Lincoln authorities question the authenticity of the written inscription, even though the volume was sold to a New York City collector for over \$3000. Still another bit of evidence of the esteem in which the Lincoln family held Dr. Smith is the tradition that, following the President's death, one of his gold-headed canes was presented to the family of the Presbyterian minister.

Lincoln National Life Foundation Correspondence Files.

14. Several defects are present in the mechanical make-up of the book. These defects are not identical in all of the books. The copy belonging to the Lincoln National Life Foundation has section I of chapter I on page 6 incorrectly marked section II. Section II of chapter I appears on page 23. In the above mentioned copy, pages 139 and 140 are missing; yet there is no break in the text.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The Foundation's copy of *The Christian's Defence*, along with the Winter 1964 issue of the *Lincoln Herald*, depicting Lloyd Ostendorf's drawing of Lincoln and Dr. James Smith near the First Presbyterian Church located at the southeast corner of 3rd & Washington Streets, Springfield, Illinois.

TO
THE HONORABLE
HENRY P. BRODNAX,
THIS WORK
IS
MOST GRATEFULLY AND MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY HIS FRIEND,
THE AUTHOR.
MAY 11, MDCCCXLIII.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Rev. Dr. James Smith dedicated his book, *The Christian's Defence*, to Henry P. Brodnax who was very likely an acquaintance of Lincoln's father in Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

In the copy once owned by George P. Hambrecht of Madison, Wisconsin, but now in the collection of Lincoln Memorial University, pages 133 to 140 are missing. They are not torn out, but it is a defect in the assembling of the book.

Lincoln National Life Foundation Correspondence Files.

15. "There are three copies in Chicago, one in the library of the University of Chicago, one in the library of McCormick Theological Seminary, and one in my own library. There are copies also in the libraries of Union Theological Seminary, New York; Center College, Danville, Kentucky; the College of the Bible, Lexington, Kentucky; the Library of Congress, and Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati. These, and the one owned by Miss Smith, are the only copies of which I have learned thus far; though doubtless there are others in dusty attics."

Barton, William E.: *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, page 165.

Other copies are owned by The Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana; Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee; Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois; First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois and William J. Johnson of St. Paul, Minnesota, who may have presented his copy to the Kansas State Historical Society.

A copy of *The Christian's Defence* once in the library of The Lincoln National Life Foundation had written in ink across the title page: "James Anderson." See Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, D. Appleton & Co., New York, N. Y. 1888, Vol. 1, page 69.

16. Four pages are devoted to a very full table of contents, and four pages are given over to the author's preface. The first volume contains 312 pages. The title page to the second volume is identical with the title page of the first volume with the exception of the volume number. The appendix contains four printed pages and throughout the work is copiously filled with notes. Leather binding, two volumes in one, 14 illustrations (several colored plates) 8 vo.
17. Houser, M. L.: *The Books that Lincoln Read*, page 12, numbers 29 and 31.
It is very likely Lincoln knew something of the book entitled *Napier's Peninsular War*.
Mabbott, Thomas O. and Philip D. Jordan: *The Prairie Chicken*, page 13.
18. "Brodnax afterwards became a Circuit Judge; he lived and died a bachelor, was scrupulously neat, wore short breeches with white stockings, knee and shoe buckles of silver, and kept everything in print;

was polite and attentive to the fair sex, and was urgent in his advice to them not to suffer a wrinkle in their stockings." Mark Hardin of Shelbyville, Kentucky, described Brodnax as follows:

"He had a coat made of white ribbed dimity. The skirts nearly touched the ground, the pockets were on the outside—white cassimere short breeches, knee buckles, silver with weighty sets, in pure glass, or like glass, very fine cotton stockings, hair powdered and tied behind, very light hair, light eyes and thin white skin, finely formed, fully common sized man, always dressed neat, had some peculiarities if not eccentricities, rather holding himself above the commonality."

Haycraft, Jr., Samuel: *A History of Elizabethtown and its Surroundings*, The Woman's Club of Elizabethtown, Ky., 1921, pages 37, 179.

Henry P. Brodnax, while serving as a judge of the Circuit Court at Henderson, Kentucky, had occasion to preside over a case between John James Audubon, the noted ornithologist, and an assailant who had attacked the pioneer artist. According to a Henderson tradition, Judge Brodnax left the bench and said:

"Mr. Audubon, you have committed a serious offence—an exceedingly serious offence Sir—in failing to kill the d— rascal."

Herrick, Francis Hobart: *Audubon the Naturalist*, Vol. 1, pages 257-259.

19. Haycraft, Jr., Samuel: *A History of Elizabethtown and its Surroundings*, page 37.
20. *Lincoln Lore* No. 44, February 10, 1930: "Thomas Lincoln Chronology."
21. Haycraft, Jr., Samuel: *A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and its Surroundings*, pages 178-179. There is a monument to his memory (Brodnax) which was erected in the cemetery at Russellville, Kentucky in 1859.
Ibid: page 179.
22. In addition to the many references by Dr. William E. Barton concerning *The Christian's Defence*, he reproduced (not in facsimile) the title page and table of contents in his work on Lincoln's religious life.
Barton, William E.: *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, pages 362-375.

BELIEVE IT? WHY NOT!

Assistant Marshal

In a Fourth of July (1839) parade, Lincoln acted as an assistant marshal.

Boat Race

In October 1849 the Lincolns visited Lexington, Kentucky. A segment of the journey was by boat, and while navigating the Ohio River a race developed between Lincoln's boat and another craft. When Lincoln's boat ran short of fuel, it hitched to a flatboat loaded with wood. Lincoln jumped upon the flatboat shouting "Come on, Boys!" and he and the others pitched wood like deck hands until the wood was loaded. However, his efforts were unavailing for the rival boat passed them.

Lincoln's Apology

On March 10, 1855 Lincoln apologized to a firm of New York attorneys for not having acknowledged the receipt of a bond they sent him in December. Lincoln wrote: "When I received the bond, I was dabbling in politics; and, of course, neglecting business. Having since been beaten out, I have gone to work again."

Inconsistent with Dignity

On September 26, 1860 the Prince of Wales passed through Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln wanted to see the royal visitor but as a candidate for the Presidency, he felt that any action on his part would be inconsistent with dignity.



Lincoln Lore

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Lincoln and "Civil Religion"

Abraham Lincoln's religion was once a subject of burning controversy among most Lincoln students. Richard N. Current gave the subject its last notable consideration by an academic historian in 1958 (in his chapter entitled "The Instrument of God" in *The Lincoln Nobody Knows*). Since then, churchmen, theologians, and professional students of religion have claimed the field that historians have aban-

doned. Far and away the most capable work produced since 1958 is William J. Wolf's *The Almost Chosen People: A Study of the Religion of Abraham Lincoln*, published in 1959 and reissued as *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln* in 1963 and as *Lincoln's Religion* in 1970. Wolf, a professor at the Episcopal Theological School, wrote a balanced account that deserves its popularity. Since then, however, the studies of Lincoln's



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 1. "A Communion Gathering in the Olden Time" is an illustration from *Presbyterian Reunion: A Memorial Volume, 1837-1871* (New York: De Witt C. Lent, 1870). It is suggestive of the norm of American religious experience in Abraham Lincoln's day. Even the restrained Presbyterians held religious services out of doors, away from an institutional church. And one can see that the single minister seems almost inadequate for the masses present.

religion have become increasingly didactic, championing Lincoln as "the chief theologian of civil religion" that America reputedly needs now. Elton Trueblood's *Abraham Lincoln: Theologian of American Anguish*, published in 1973, is the most widely noted of these recent attempts to find in Lincoln a model for a twentieth-century theology.

A word about this twentieth-century theology, "civil religion," is in order. It is a loose liberal theology which says that the nation in its history must be informed by some spiritual role. As a liberal theology, it conceives of spirituality as embodied in part in social morality. As Herbert Richardson says in "Civil Religion in Theological Perspective" (in Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, eds., *American Civil Religion* [New York: Harper and Row, 1974]), "The concept 'civil religion' unites two terms: the civil order and the religious order." It is broadly ecumenical and therefore rather uninstitutional, unchurchly, and anti-creedal. It is historically oriented and conceives of revelation as a gradual historical development. A recent critic of civil religion (and of Abraham Lincoln as theologian or prophet of the religion), Melvin B. Endy, Jr., of the Religion Department at Hamilton College, terms it "simply . . . the mythic belief that the United States is a latter-day chosen nation that has been brought into existence and providentially guided as a fundamentally new social order to serve uniquely as a 'city on a hill' for the rest of mankind."

Abraham Lincoln is an important prophet in this scheme for several reasons, not the least of which is that he never too closely identified this nation's purposes at any one time with God's will. Champions of civil religion fear just what its critics harp on as its dangerous weakness: it might lead to an intolerant belief that this nation state can do no wrong. The Civil War President's famed expression of concern "that I and

this nation should be on the Lord's side" in response to a clergyman's question whether "the Lord was on our side" becomes a crucial episode for the advocates of civil religion. (In truth, this quotation is known to us only through the second-hand recollections of painter Francis Bicknell Carpenter, *Six Months in the White House* [New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1866], page 282.) Another major document, of course, is the Second Inaugural Address with its forgiving pledge of "malice towards none; . . . charity for all." Thus Lincoln strived to make the war a moral crusade against the social evil of slavery without ever assuming that God's purpose was so clear that the opposition had to be seen strictly as malevolent forces of Satan's darkness. "His patriotism," says Trueblood, "was of such magnitude that it cannot easily be exaggerated, but it was never idolatrous, and it was saved from idolatry by the overwhelming sense of the sovereignty of God" (page 118).

Once Lincoln's Christian statesmanship is so interpreted, it is easy to fit the rest of his life into a scheme which nicely fits the demands of civil religion. His own personal faith developed historically and slowly through periods of anguished doubt and uncertainty about the divine will. "One of the important features of Lincoln's theology" as Trueblood describes it, was "that it was a *development*." Lincoln's "spiritual pilgrimage" led from "theological positions of his early manhood" to mature ones which had "little in common" with the earlier ones. In fact, he probably went through a stage in which he was the village skeptic:

In his effort to reach a rational theology, Lincoln as a young man had very little real help. There was no church at New Salem, and few of his neighbors cared greatly about ideas. Though the deep sense of reverence which had developed in the Indiana forest seems never to have left the young man, he began to speculate in ways which made some people think of him as verging on infidelity. Certainly he was influenced for a time by the amateur philosophizing of his pioneer neighbors, as he revolted against the ignorant preaching which he heard from time to time. As a young boy in Indiana, he had enjoyed mimicking the hell-fire and brimstone preachers of the raw frontier.

Lincoln argued, for a time, a belief in what he called the "Doctrine of Necessity," what we would call determinism today.

In 1841, Lincoln and Mary Todd temporarily broke off their engagement to be married. Lincoln was thrown into such a slough of despond that he neglected his duties as a legislator and went to visit his old friend Joshua Speed in Kentucky. Speed's mother-in-law gave Lincoln a new Bible, and Lincoln said of it in a letter, ". . . I intend to read it regularly when I return home. I doubt not that it is really, as she says, the best cure for the 'Blues' could one but take it according to the truth." Twenty years later in the White House, Lincoln still remembered the gift of the Bible. Most historians mark this date, 1841, as a time when Lincoln began to have a renewed awareness of the Revealed Word.

The next step in his spiritual pilgrimage was a new awareness of the Word as it came from preachers. In 1850, Lincoln's three-year-old son Edward Baker died after a fifty-two day illness. Mary Lincoln was so shaken that she joined Springfield's First Presbyterian Church, the pastor of which, Dr. James Smith, consoled her and preached the sermon at her son's funeral. Her husband did not join, but he began to attend services more regularly, as is evidenced by his renting a pew in Dr. Smith's church.

The years of the Civil War were the last big step in Lincoln's pilgrimage. It was a time so suffused with a sense of crisis and great moral questions that it is difficult to focus on specific events in the way one can in Lincoln's earlier life. Nevertheless, one date does seem to stand out in all accounts, February 20, 1862. On that day, Lincoln's eleven-year-old son William Wallace died. Mrs. Lincoln, who had herself been severely shaken by the domestic tragedy, recalled later, in re-



Courtesy Illinois State Historical Library

FIGURE 2. Dr. James Smith was the minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield from 1849 to 1856. President Lincoln remembered the family's consolers and appointed him Consul to Dundee, Scotland.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
FIGURE 3. The First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois, had as a full-fledged member Mary Todd Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln rented a pew there and heard some of Dr. Smith's sermons.

gard to Lincoln's religion, "He first seemed to think about the subject when our boy Willie died, and then more than ever about the time he went to Gettysburg." (Mrs. Lincoln admitted, incidentally, that her husband was "never a technical Christian.") Mary Todd Lincoln could not herself completely sort out the discrete events of that blurred period of daily crises, and she seems to have linked his religious development somewhat with the Gettysburg Address. But she did recall that there was an abrupt change (it was the "first" time he thought about it) after Willie's death.

Thus Lincoln's religion, never orthodox but increasingly profound, developed fully in time, the civil religionists tell us, to inform the most important actions of his Christian statesmanship, especially, of course, the Emancipation Proclamation, decided on as a policy by Lincoln in the summer of 1862.

Religious writers are now much too sophisticated to fall for the myriad of unreliable stories of secret promises made to clergymen days before his death that Lincoln was to convert and become a full-fledged member of some church or other. They listen to what the historians tell them were the facts of Lincoln's religious life and attempt merely to interpret them in their own way. They seem in a great haste, though, to master the facts and move on to the important didactic work at hand. Unfortunately, the Lincoln story deserves a more leisurely examination, the sort of examination which does not wrench the man from his historical context but carefully measures him against the events and culture of his own times.

In his haste to fit Lincoln into his theological scheme, Trueblood has failed to fit Lincoln into the historic surroundings of Lincoln's own life. There was a sort of American civil religion that was being championed in Lincoln's own time, and he was notably impervious to its appeal. In fact, there was an attempt to found a specifically religious party in American politics in

the 1850's, the American or Know Nothing party. Informed by an impatient reforming zeal to take a stand on issues which the established Whig and Democratic parties avoided, the Americans waged campaigns to lengthen the period of naturalization for immigrants to twenty-one years (the same time it took a native-born American to gain the franchise), to exclude foreign-born citizens from holding public office, and, above all else, to keep the Catholic Church from receiving public money for parochial schools. The public schools of Lincoln's day required Bible reading and supplied the Bible used by Protestants for the purpose. Catholics used a different Bible and reasoned that their tax dollars ought not to go to the purpose of changing their sons and daughters into Protestants. The issue stirred hatred and political excitement as only public school issues can in American political history.

Although Know Nothingism did not measure up to the standards of today's ecumenism, it was at least a nonsectarian movement. It required cooperation among all the differing Protestant sects to the end of halting what was viewed as the Roman menace to American civil liberties. The chief complaint against the Roman Catholic Church was that it did not believe in separation of church and state nor in freedom of thought and expression, two fundamental aspects of American political identity. Complaints about specific religious interpretations of, say, the Eucharist did not find their way into the political literature.

That Lincoln was never tempted by the Know Nothings is common knowledge. That the temptation must have been very great is not so commonly acknowledged. Lincoln told Owen Lovejoy on August 11, 1855, that the Know Nothings in Springfield "are mostly my old political and personal friends; and I have hoped their organization would die out without the painful necessity of my taking an open stand against them." The Know Nothing enthusiasm even infected Lincoln's own home. In 1856, he cast his fortunes with the Republicans and John Charles Frémont. The Americans and Whig remnants also had a candidate in the field, Millard Fillmore, and, had there been female suffrage in that day, Mrs. Lincoln would have voted for a different candidate from her husband. Writing to her sister Emilie Todd Helm on November 23, 1856, Mrs. Lincoln discussed the recent election:

Your Husband, I believe, like some of the rest of ours, has a great taste for politics & has taken much interest, in the late contest, which has resulted very much as I expected, not hoped—

Altho' Mr L- is, or was a *Freemont* man, you must not include him with so many of those, who belong to *that party*, an *Abolitionist*. . . . My weak woman's heart was too Southern in feeling, to sympathise with any but Fillmore, I have always been a great admirer of his, he made so good a President & is so just a man & feels the *necessity* of keeping foreigners, within bounds. If some of you Kentuckians, had to deal with the "wild Irish," as we housekeepers are sometimes called upon to do, the south would certainly elect Mr Fillmore next time[.]

Lincoln's religion was exempt from the anti-Catholic animus which was a norm of American Protestantism in that pre-ecumenical era. In fact, Lincoln's religion was for the most part unlike that of most Americans in his day. The other great aspect of antebellum Protestantism was evangelicalism, enthusiastic revivalism. Indeed, the two great forces were closely related. The original impulse for revivalism in the two decades after 1800 had fed, in some part, off the fear of the Catholic menace in the West. And both phenomena were aspects of enthusiastic religion. There was no cool rationalism in the barks, jerks, laughing exercises, singing exercises, anxious benches, prayers of faith, and sermons from the heart which gave this era of American religious history, known as the Second Great Awakening, its distinctive cast. And there was no cool rationalism in the Know Nothing



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 4. The Reverend Phineas D. Gurley ministered to Lincoln's spiritual needs while he was President. He conducted Willie's funeral service and delivered the funeral address at the White House after Abraham Lincoln's death.

movement, which Michael F. Holt has described as "the politics of impatience." By contrast, Lincoln's religion was notably quiet, private, and rationalistic rather than enthusiastic in tone.

Now doubtless the civil religionists' answer to this would be that I have just pointed out all the reasons that Abraham Lincoln is the superior prophet of American civil religion. They argue that a civil religion is inevitable. Therefore, they would simply say that Lincoln's is the superior version of civil religion, uniting morality and statecraft without uniting specific religious institutions and the state. In fact, Elton Trueblood finds just these traits to be the superior ones in Lincoln's religious example: (1) He never joined a church because no creed was completely satisfactory. (2) His religion needed no ministers and no institutional church; it was a religion that relied on the Bible and private prayer and a careful and humble reading of the Divine Plan as revealed gradually in the workings of the American electorate. There was no embarrassing fundamentalist enthusiasm about Lincoln's dignified calls for national days of fasting and thanksgiving during the Civil War. (Mr. Trueblood, incidentally, is a Quaker, and his own religion has never required preachers or an institutional church.)

It is unfair and unhistorical to suggest by this that Lincoln was superior to his benighted age and that his more restrained religious experience looked forward to a better day when passionate emotionalism would wither and religion would be more dignified, more sophisticated, and less the result of crude mechanical contrivances like the anxious bench. Actually, the norm of religious experience in Lincoln's own day was increasingly anti-creedal (in that it stressed the role of the heart in conversion over the role of any intellectual assent to

systematic doctrine enunciated in theological sermons). It was also anti-churchly. Revivals took places in camps and fields and tents, not within the confines of an institutional church presided over by an established minister. Lincoln's religion thus resembled the religion of his day in *unessential* matters; it was different in the essential one, the personal form of expressing religious passion. Many Americans did it by falling on the ground or at least by professing a changed heart. Lincoln expressed it in musings on the mysterious workings of the Divine Will and apparently by increasing private reading of the Bible and increased attention to religious teaching by ministers.

The civil religionists were so happy to find in Lincoln's spiritual pilgrimage a gradual development or growth that flowered finally in those war years of terrible passion that they failed to note the most obvious aspect of it: *it was always utterly private and personal.*

All of the major landmarks of Lincoln's religious history were events which had absolutely nothing to do with civil society, the state, the nation, politics, moral reform, or the general public. He found the Bible as a cure for deep personal depression caused by the break up of his romance with Mary Todd. He first rented a pew in a church when he experienced the death of an infant son. He took his first interest in religion large enough for his wife to perceive it when he lost another young son to death in 1862. Mrs. Lincoln said his interest *increased* at the time of the Gettysburg Address, but she said it was triggered by Willie's death. It seems wrongheaded to try to found a *civil* religion on a prophet who was utterly *private* in his own religious experience. The civil religionists use Lincoln's example to inspire a form of religion which did not move Abraham Lincoln himself.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 5. The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church was Phineas Gurley's pulpit. The church now contains chimes and bells that were gifts of Robert Todd Lincoln and Mary Lincoln Isham, son and granddaughter of Abraham Lincoln.